

# Basic Needs and Social Determinants of Wellbeing

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## Valued Conditions Expressed by King County Residents

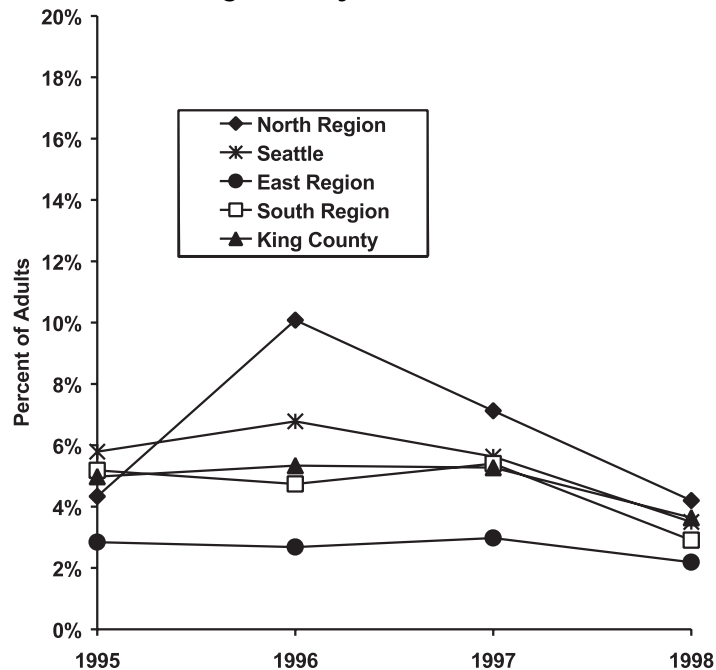
- *Everyone in the county has the basic necessities of living—nutritious food, adequate shelter and clothing.*
- *All people live in a quality residence and do not spend a high percentage of their income to do so. Low income people can find affordable housing in a variety of neighborhoods.*
- *Homelessness is reduced and homeless people are cared for.*
- *The potential of immigrants is recognized and they are supported to improve their English and to find jobs suitable to their skill, expertise, and experience.*
- *There is equitable distribution of incomes; the gap in wealth and income between the rich and poor people is narrowed.*
- *People earn a livable wage and there is less discrepancy between the average worker's income and that of the average chief executive.*
- *Everyone has sufficient informal social support—relationships through neighborhood interaction, work, communities of faith, common interests, etc.*
- *People are treated fairly in employment, housing and education.*
- *All people feel included in the larger community. No members of any group feel isolated (men, women, youth, the elderly, disabled, immigrants, ethnic/racial religious groups, gays and lesbians).*
- *There is respect for differences and no one is discriminated against socially in employment, housing or education due to race/ethnicity, age, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.*

The valued conditions came from citizen opinion expressed as values and concerns in the telephone survey, focus groups, and in the civic and public forums. The valued conditions are expressed as “ideal” conditions—based on the vision of what residents want for themselves, their families and communities.

## Adequate Food

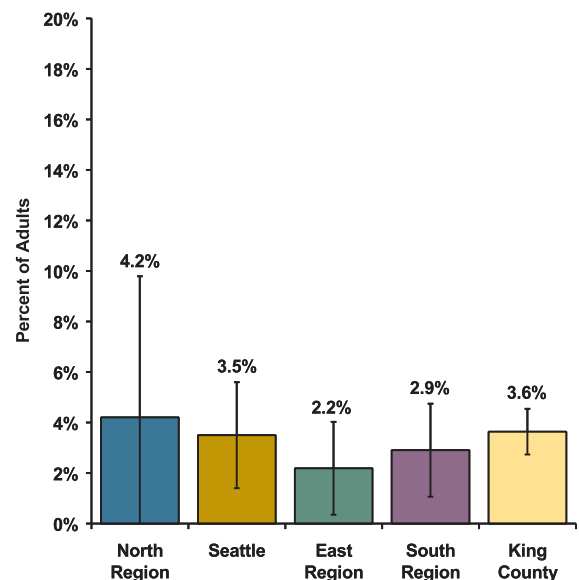
Perhaps the most basic human need is to have enough nutritious and safe food. People with low-wage jobs and those dependent on dwindling government assistance may not have adequate food.

Percent of Adults Age 18+ Who Report Being Concerned about Having Enough Food for Themselves or Their Family in the Past 30 Days  
King County, 1995-1998

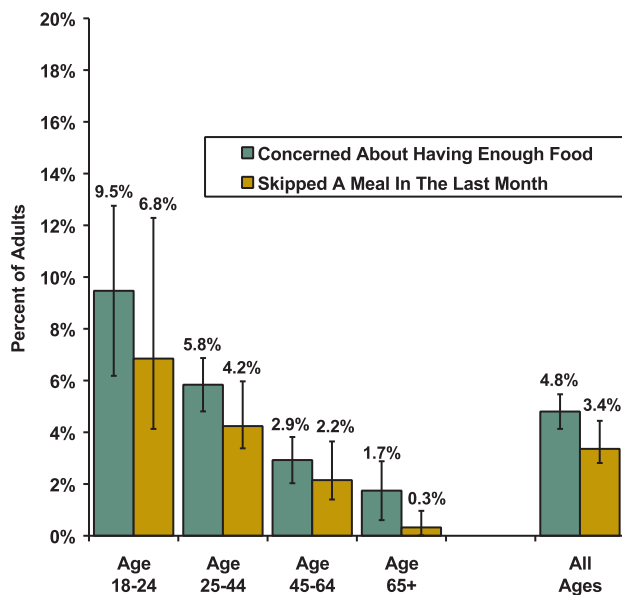


- In 1998, 3.6% of the King County population was concerned about having enough food for themselves or their family. There were no significant differences among the regions.
- Not surprisingly, concerns about having enough food tend to increase with decreasing income level, 18.3% of people making less than \$10,000 per year were concerned about having enough food, and 15.3% of people in this income range said they had skipped a meal sometime in the last month because of lack of money (data not shown).
- College graduates were significantly less likely to be concerned about having enough food than those with less formal education (data not shown).
- A national hunger study released in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture ranks Washington State as eighth in the nation in its prevalence of hunger, even though the poverty rate is below the national average.

Percent of Adults Age 18+ Who Report Being Concerned About Having Enough Food for Themselves or Their Family in the Past 30 Days  
King County, 1998



**Percent of Adults Age 18+ By Age  
Who Report Being Concerned About Having  
Enough Food or Who Have Skipped a Meal Because  
of Money in the Past 30 Days  
King County, Four-Year Average, 1995-1998**



- On average from 1995-1998, African Americans (11.0%) and Asian American-Pacific Islanders (12.6%) had greater food concerns than the white (3.9%) population (data not shown).

- Food concerns decrease with age. People below the age of 45 are more likely to be concerned about having enough food than people in the older age groups.
- These data should not be interpreted to imply that food security is not an important issue for seniors—especially low-income seniors. Focus groups conducted in 1999 with 85 low-income seniors in King County found that elders may be able to manage their food resources better than younger people because of greater life experiences. However, focus group participants also reported having difficulty getting to shops to buy food either because they lack convenient transportation or because they live in an area without any supermarkets.
- It isn't known how many people in King County rely on government or charitable food programs. According to data collected by City of Seattle-funded food banks, 45,100 households (representing 109,600 individuals) utilized their services in 1999. These data do not include faith-based or other private food banks in Seattle, or food banks outside the city. Of these people, 32.9% were children under 19, and 25.4% were seniors age 55 or older (data not shown).
- A 1997 national study of food bank clients by America's Second Harvest found that of those people seeking emergency food relief, 41% received food stamps. Of those receiving food stamps, 79% said that they do not last through the end of the month, and 20% had seen a decrease in their benefits.

### Data Source, Definition, and Limitations

Data are from the Washington State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). The BRFSS is a random telephone interview survey of non-institutionalized adults age 18 and older that has been conducted in King County every year since 1987. The geographic boundaries of the four King County subregions are defined by aggregating zip codes.

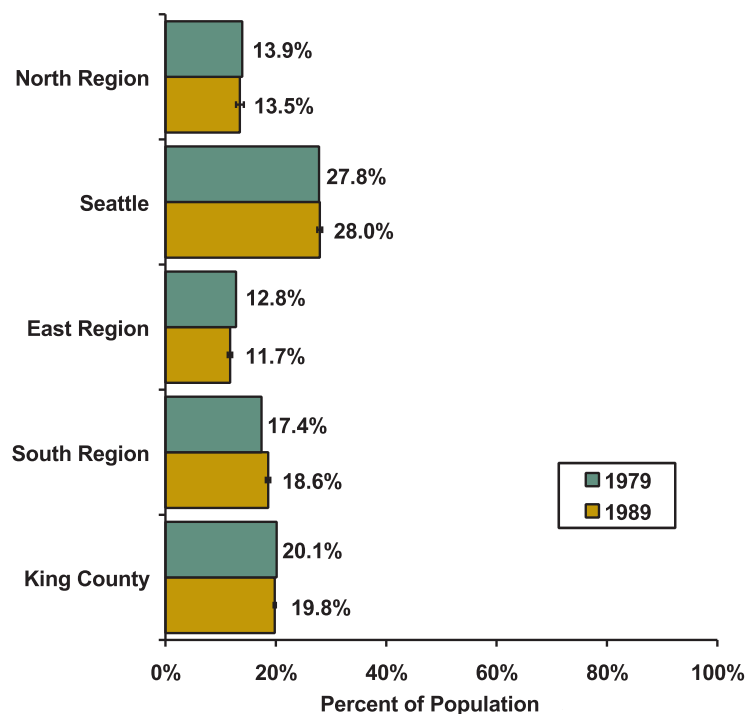
National data are from *Household Food Security in the United States: 1995-1998*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, September, 1999 and *Hunger 1997: The Faces & Facts*, America's Second Harvest. Focus groups on food security issues among seniors were conducted by Pat Manuel, Nutritional Consultant with Public Health-Seattle & King County. Estimates of City of Seattle-funded Food Bank usage are from the City of Seattle Human Services Department, Community Services Division.

The limitations of an English-only telephone survey include the following: a) people who do not have a telephone are missed, b) people who do not speak English do not participate, c) people who have less education and lower incomes tend to be underrepresented. The sample of people reached in a telephone survey will not include those people who might be most in need of more or better food—that is the homeless and those unable to afford to have telephones.

## Livable-Wage Income

Everyone needs enough income to pay for the basic necessities of daily living: shelter, food, clothing, and transportation. Without a livable-wage income, people suffer a lack of dignity and a variety of social and health problems. The livable-wage income indicator is defined as the percent of the population living in households with a total income that is less than twice the poverty level, as defined by the federal government. For a family of four, the livable wage income in 1989 was \$25,300.

Percent of Population Living Below 200% of Federal Poverty Level  
King County, 1979 and 1989



- In 1989, almost one in five people in King County was living in a household without a livable wage income. For Washington State, that figure was 27.5%, and for the U.S. it was 31.4% (data not shown).
- Of the four regions, Seattle had the greatest percentage of persons without a livable-wage income (28.0%), followed by South Region (18.6%), North Region (13.5%), and East Region (11.7%).
- There was little improvement between 1979 and 1989, except in East Region. South Region had a greater percentage of people who did not earn a livable-wage income in 1989 than it did in 1979.

**Percent of Population Living Below 100% of Federal Poverty Level By Race/Ethnicity  
King County, 1979 and 1989**

Place	White		African American		Native American		Asian/Pac. Islander		Hispanic	
	1979	1989	1979	1989	1979	1989	1979	1989	1979	1989
North Region	4.3%	4.0%	18.1%	15.1%	25.1%	15.3%	4.9%	10.1%	10.2%	7.7%
Seattle	9.1%	9.0%	22.7%	25.2%	23.3%	32.9%	15.2%	18.9%	19.1%	22.2%
East Region	4.2%	3.7%	11.0%	11.0%	4.2%	8.6%	13.9%	9.9%	8.0%	6.9%
South Region	5.9%	5.8%	14.1%	17.3%	17.1%	24.2%	9.6%	12.7%	10.0%	11.8%
King County	6.5%	6.1%	21.0%	22.3%	20.7%	25.7%	13.2%	15.2%	13.9%	14.9%

- Poverty by race and ethnicity is only reported at the 100% poverty level. The proportion of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian American-

Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics living in poverty increased from 1979 to 1989. That proportion decreased slightly for whites.

**Percent of Children Age 0-17 and All Persons  
Living Below 100% of Federal Poverty Level  
King County, 1979 and 1989**

Place	All Ages		Children	
	1979	1989	1979	1989
North Region	4.5%	4.7%	NA	5.5%
Seattle	11.2%	12.4%	NA	16.2%
East Region	4.7%	4.2%	NA	5.0%
South Region	6.3%	6.9%	NA	9.9%
King County	7.7%	8.0%	NA	9.8%

- From 1979 to 1989, the percentage of the King County population living in poverty increased from 7.7% to 8.0%. The estimate for 1995 is 8.6% (data not shown).

- The poverty rate for children age 0-17 is growing faster than for the population as a whole. In 1989, 9.8% of King County children lived in poverty. By 1995, that figure had increased to 12.3% (data not shown). In absolute terms, the number of children living in poverty increased from approximately 32,600 to 45,400. Data on children in poverty is not available for 1979.
- King County poverty rates are lower than Washington State and national averages (data not shown).
- Of the four regions in 1989, Seattle had the greatest percent of all persons and children in poverty (12.4% and 16.2%, respectively).

### Data Source, Definition, and Limitations

Income and poverty data are from the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census and are based on reported income from the previous year. The most recent year of comprehensive data available is 1989, but the 2000 census will provide more up-to-date information on poverty and livable wage incomes. Limited data for 1995 are from the U.S. Census Bureau State and County Income and Poverty Estimates. Age and race breakdowns are not available for persons below 200% of FPL (Federal Poverty Level). The geographic boundaries of King County and the four subregions are defined by aggregating census tracts.

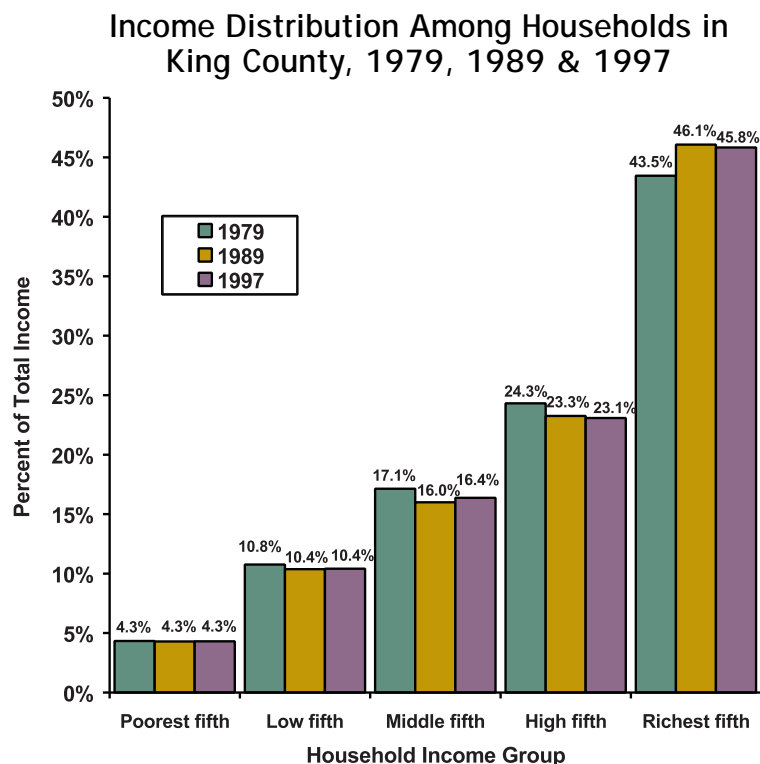
The federal poverty level is a threshold income limit that varies according to family size and composition and is adjusted each year. All persons living in a household with a total annual income below that threshold dollar amount are counted in the 100% poverty statistics. A livable wage is considered to be at least twice the poverty level income. The 200% poverty threshold in 1989 for a family of four was \$25,300, and for a single person over age 65, \$11,900. The same thresholds in 1998 were \$33,300 and \$15,600, respectively.

Persons of Hispanic ethnicity may also be counted in any of the race groups.

## Income Distribution

Recent research suggests that in addition to the social consequences of economic inequality—such as rising crime rates, social exclusion, and despair—the widening gap between rich and poor also has a detrimental effect on the health of the entire population. One indicator of economic inequality is income distribution, measured by the share of total income received by different fifths, or quintiles, of the total number of households in the population.

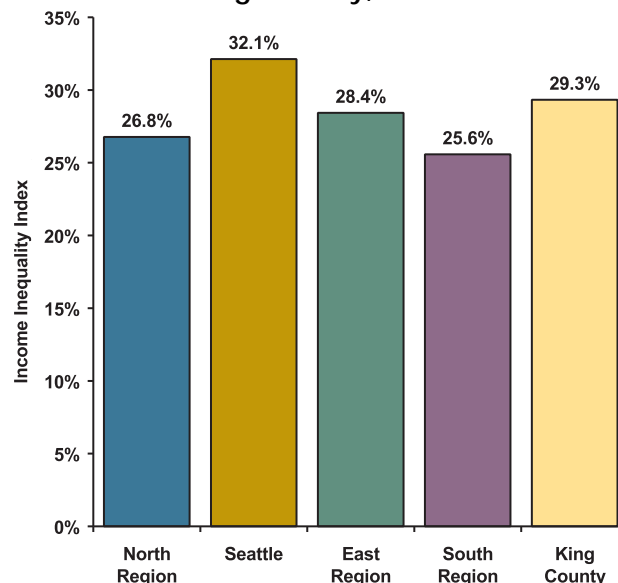
Total wealth is an even more important indicator of inequality because it includes the dollar value of all the assets of a household—bank accounts, stocks, bonds, life insurance, savings, mutual fund shares, houses, cars and appliances, pension rights—and excludes the liabilities and debts. Having wealth brings people security and social status. In turn, poor people may feel hopeless and without the power to change their family, neighborhood, and community circumstances.



- The income distribution in King County can be measured by the percentage of total income in one year earned by each fifth of the households, arranged by increasing income. Each income group has an equal number of households.
- Preliminary data from 1997 indicates that the richest 20% of King County households received 46% of the total income that year. The poorest 20% earned only 4% of the total income.
- King County households in the highest income group earned at least \$34,800 in 1979, \$63,700 in 1989, and \$101,000 in 1997.
- In the decade between 1979 and 1989, there was a shift of income away from the three middle income groups to the highest income group.
- The percent of income earned by the poorest fifth remained constant from 1979 to 1997.
- While no local wealth data are available, nationally, wealth inequality has always been substantially greater than income inequality. Between 1983 and 1989, the top fifth received more than 75% of the total increase in income and 99% of the increase in wealth.

- If income were evenly distributed across all households in an area, then each group representing 10% of the households would receive 10% of the total income. This is the basic assumption behind the calculation of the Income Inequality Index. This Index is a single number which approximates the share of total income that would have to be transferred from households with an income above the average to households with an income below the average for there to be perfect equity in the distribution of income. A higher index score means more disparity exists.
- The 1989 Income Inequality Index was 29.3% in King County and 30.2% nationally. The region with the highest index was Seattle (32.1%). South Region had the lowest index (25.6%) and, therefore, the smallest degree of inequity.
- Statewide values for the Income Inequality Index range from 27.1 in New Hampshire to 34.1 in Louisiana.

### Income Inequality Index King County, 1989



### Median Household Income in King County 1979, 1989 & 1997

Place	1979	1989	1997
North Region	\$24,800	\$42,000	\$66,400
Seattle	\$16,300	\$29,400	\$45,800
East Region	\$26,400	\$46,100	\$72,600
South Region	\$21,100	\$36,800	\$58,700
King County	\$20,700	\$36,200	\$57,300

- The median income is the income level that separates the top and bottom half of all households.
- The 1989 median household income was \$31,200 in Washington State and \$28,900 in the U.S.
- The 1989 median household income countywide was \$36,200. The highest and lowest regional median household incomes were in East Region (\$46,100) and Seattle (\$29,400), respectively.

### Data Source, Definition, and Limitations

Data are from the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census and are based on reported income from the previous year. The geographic boundaries of King County and the four subregions are defined by aggregating census tracts. The 1997 Household Income Preliminary Estimates are from the Puget Sound Regional Council. National data on wealth inequality is from the *Survey of Consumer Finances*, 1983 and 1989. Statewide and national values for the Income Inequality Index are from Kennedy, Kawachi, and Prothrow-Stith (1996). "Income distribution and mortality: Cross sectional ecological study of the Robin Hood Index in the United States", *British Medical Journal*, 312, 1004-1007.

These data estimate the number of households in various income ranges. "Income" consists of pre-tax wages, interest, rental income, and other personal receipts, including government cash transfers. These figures do not include other types of income such as capital gains, employer-paid health insurance, or in-kind government assistance such as food stamps. Most of this non-money income is earned by the more affluent households. Furthermore, this indicator does not measure accumulated wealth such as property, savings, and other assets. Nor does it consider varying tax rates paid by the different income groups.

What we refer to here as the Income Inequality Index (also known as the Pietra ratio) is only one of several measures of income distribution in use. One of the limitations of using household income data to measure income distribution is that household income does not take into account the number of people who live in the household and depend on that income.

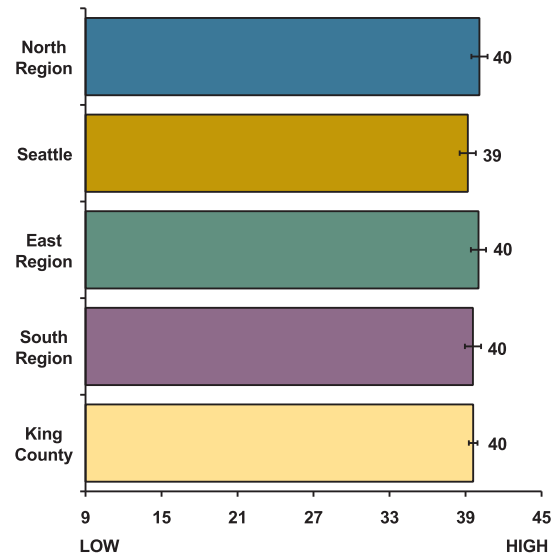


## Social Support

Social support helps give people the emotional and practical resources they need. Receiving affection, companionship, assistance, and information from family and friends makes people feel loved, esteemed, cared for, valued and secure. These factors have a protective effect on health and wellbeing.

- Social support was measured by asking people 9 questions about specific types of social support they believe they can rely on. Answers to the 9 questions were added to create a social support scale with a possible score between 9 (Low) and 45 (High).
- The average (mean) social support score for adults in King County was 40. There were no significant differences in average social support level by region.
- While it appears that there were lower levels of specific types of support in Seattle than other regions of the county, these differences are not statistically significant.

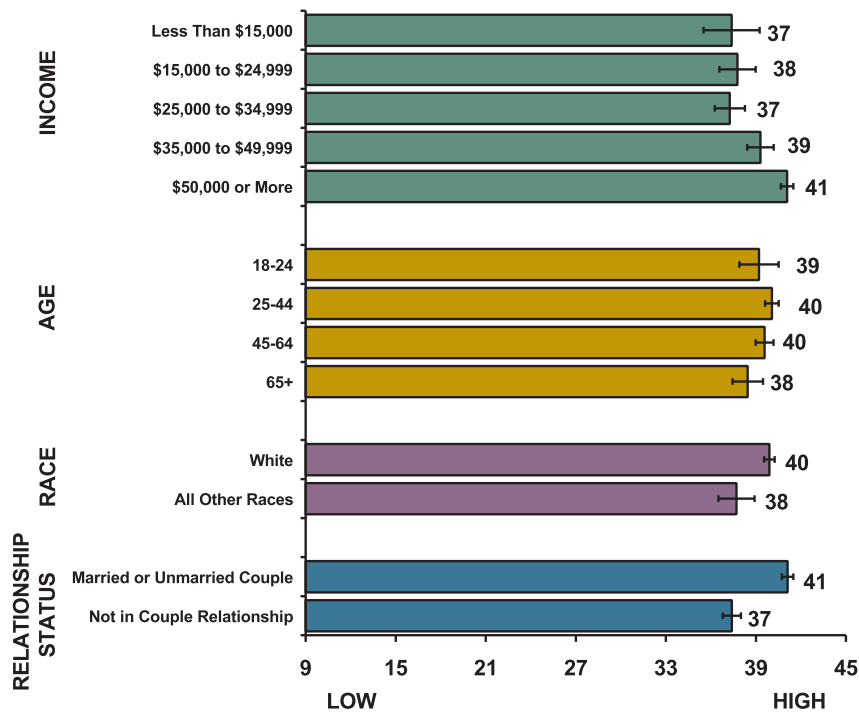
Average Level of Social Support  
King County, 1999



Percent of Adults Who Have Specific Supports "All of the Time"  
King County, 1999

How often is each of the following kinds of support available to you if you need it?	North Region	Seattle	East Region	South Region	King County
...someone to help you if you were confined to bed	55%	45%	51%	52%	50%
...someone to take you to the doctor if you needed it	67%	64%	68%	64%	65%
...someone who shows you love and affection	80%	73%	79%	79%	77%
...someone to confide in or talk about yourself or your problems	72%	68%	68%	71%	69%
...someone who hugs you	74%	64%	71%	70%	69%
...someone to get together with for relaxation	63%	60%	61%	63%	61%
...someone to help with daily chores if you were sick	55%	52%	55%	58%	55%
...someone to turn to for suggestions about how to deal with a personal problem	64%	59%	64%	62%	62%
...someone to love and make you feel wanted	75%	67%	74%	71%	71%

### Average Level of Social Support By Income, Age, Race, and Relationship Status King County, 1999



- People with incomes of \$50,000 or more have higher levels of support than people with lower incomes.
- Older residents (age 65 years and older) experience less social support than young people age 25 to 44 years.
- People who are white have more social support than people of other races.
- People who live in a couple (either married or unmarried) have more social support than others who are separated, divorced, widowed or never married.

#### Data Source, Definition, and Limitations

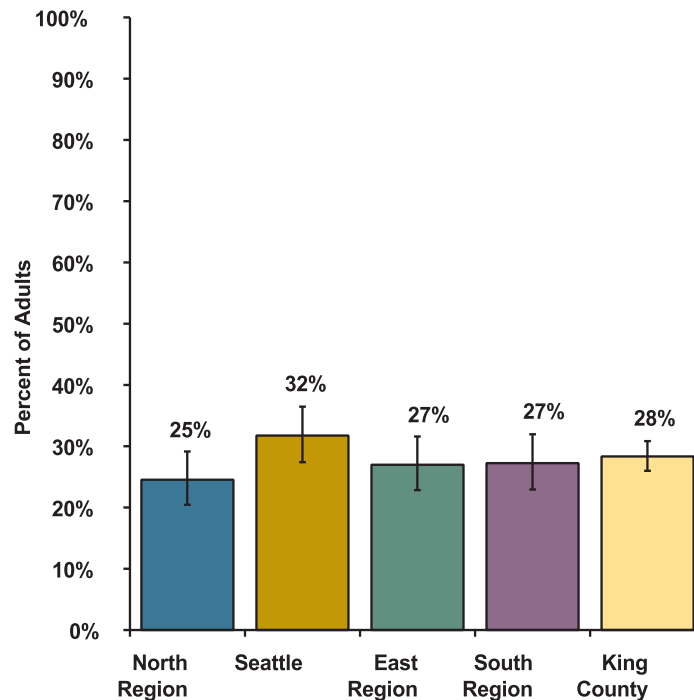
The social support measures are from the King County Community Health Survey, 1999, which used social support questions from the short version of the Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey (Cathy Sherbourne and Anita Stewart, 1991). These items measure perceived social support of various types: a) emotional support, love, and empathy, b) instrumental or tangible support, c) information, guidance, or feedback, d) appraisal support, which helps the person evaluate herself, and e) companionship in leisure and recreational activities.

The limitations of an English-only telephone survey include the following: a) people who do not have a telephone are missed, b) people who do not speak English do not participate, c) people who have less education and lower incomes tend to be underrepresented.

## Freedom From Discrimination

Discrimination is unjust and can impact health and cost lives. One indicator of discrimination is people's reports of recent treatment that is perceived as unfair, based on gender, age, race or color, ethnic background, language, socioeconomic position, social class, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. A second indicator is the number of hate crimes reported by police.

Percent of Adults  
Who Experienced Any Discrimination in Past Year  
King County, 1999



- Discrimination was measured by asking King County adults age 18 and older several questions about whether, in the past year, they had “experienced discrimination, been prevented from doing something or been hassled or made to feel inferior by someone else because of race, etc.” in one or more settings.
- 28% of adults reported that they experienced some type of discrimination in the past year. There were no significant differences in this percentage by region of the County.
- More Blacks, Native Americans, Asian American-Pacific Islanders (41% for these groups combined) experienced discrimination in the past year compared to whites (27%) (data not shown).
- More females (32%) experienced discrimination in the past year than males (24%) (data not shown).
- More young people age 18-24 (46%) than older people (31% for ages 25-44, 26% for ages 45-64 and 11% for 65 and above) experienced discrimination.

**Percent of Adults Who Experienced Discrimination  
in the Past Year in Specific Settings  
King County, 1999**

Have you experienced discrimination, been prevented from doing something or been hassled or made to feel inferior by someone else in any of the following settings:	North Region	Seattle	East Region	South Region	King County
...at school?	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%
...getting a job?	6%	4%	5%	3%	4%
...at work?	10%	11%	10%	11%	11%
...at home?	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%
...getting medical care?	4%	5%	5%	4%	5%
...getting housing?	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%
...getting a loan?	2%	3%	3%	5%	4%
...applying for social services or public assistance?	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%
...on the street or in a public setting?	12%	16%	12%	10%	13%
...from the police or in the courts?	6%	6%	5%	3%	5%
...in your family?	3%	2%	3%	4%	3%
...in any other setting?	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

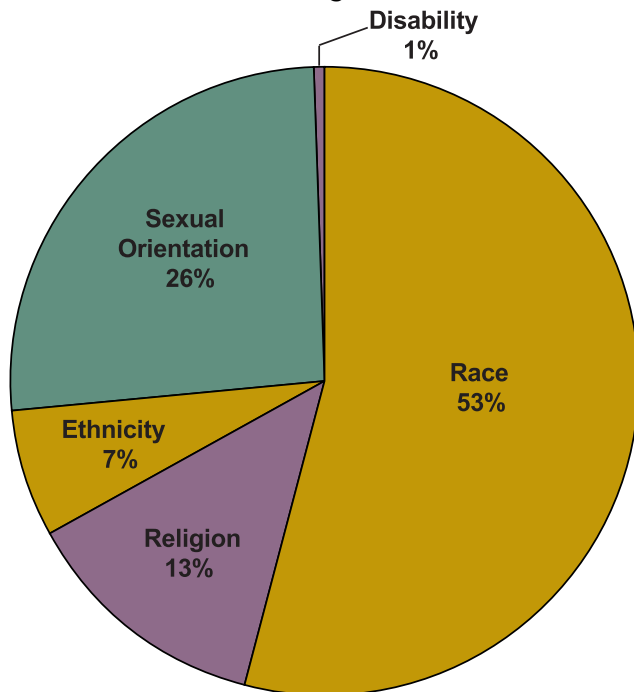
- Public settings (13%) and work settings (11%) were the most common place for these acts of discrimination to occur.
- 5% reported discrimination from the police or in court and also in getting medical care (in another King County survey, 15% reported discrimination in getting health care).

**Of Adults Experiencing Discrimination  
in Past Year, Percent Who Specify Type of Discrimination  
King County, 1999**

Do you believe that the act of discrimination was based on your:	North Region	Seattle	East Region	South Region	King County
...gender (being male or female)?	35%	40%	29%	29%	33%
...race or color?	16%	19%	16%	21%	19%
...socioeconomic position or social class?	23%	17%	17%	20%	19%
...age?	18%	12%	17%	18%	16%
...sexual orientation?	6%	11%	8%	1%	7%
...disability?	5%	5%	6%	10%	7%
...ethnic background or country of origin?	6%	6%	7%	6%	6%
...religion?	7%	3%	2%	5%	4%
...language or accent?	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
...other?	1%	3%	1%	1%	2%

- For each setting asked about in the survey, respondents were asked if they believed that act of discrimination (in setting) was based on their gender, race or color, age, or other factors as seen in the table above.
- By far the most common type of discrimination experienced in the past year was based on gender.
- Of all King County adults experiencing some discrimination in the past year, 33% said they believed that it was because of their gender.
- Discrimination based on race, socioeconomic position, and age were the next most commonly experienced types of discrimination or unfair treatment.

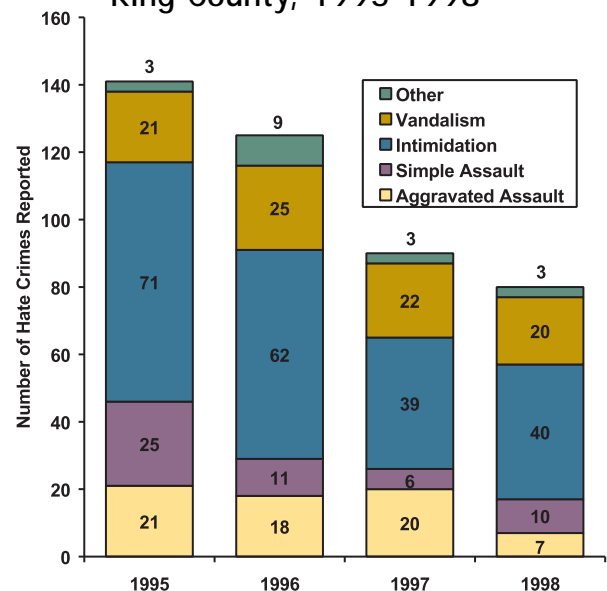
### Hate Crimes By Bias Motivation King County Four Year Average, 1995-1998



- Assault, intimidation and vandalism account for over 90% of all hate crime offenses. The remainder include rape, robbery, burglary, theft and arson. There were no murders associated with hate crimes in King County, although there were four in Washington State during this period.
- Aggravated assault is distinguished from simple assault by the use of a weapon or means likely to produce death or serious injury.

- In 1998 in King County there were 78 reported hate crimes involving 80 victims. This was a decrease from 84 crimes in 1997. The number and rate of hate crimes has decreased each year since reporting began in 1995.
- Over half of all hate crimes in King County are racially motivated. Sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity/national origin are the other major bias motivations. The greatest number of incidents involve an anti-Black or anti-male homosexual motivation. There were no hate crimes motivated by gender bias reported from 1995-1998.
- Though some rapes and domestic violence crimes may be motivated by gender bias, these offenses are not counted as hate crimes against women unless there is evidence that the offender was targeting the victim based on hatred for her gender.

### Hate Crimes By Type of Offense King County, 1995-1998



#### Data Source, Definition, and Limitations

The discrimination measures are from the King County Community Health Survey, 1999, which used questions on unfair treatment adapted from questions in the CARDIA Study IV (Nancy Krieger).

A limitation of self reported experiences of discrimination is that people's interpretations of "discrimination" and "unfair" may not be the same. The limitations of a telephone survey include the following: a) people who do not have a telephone are missed, b) people who do not speak English are not included, c) people who have less education and lower incomes tend to be underrepresented.

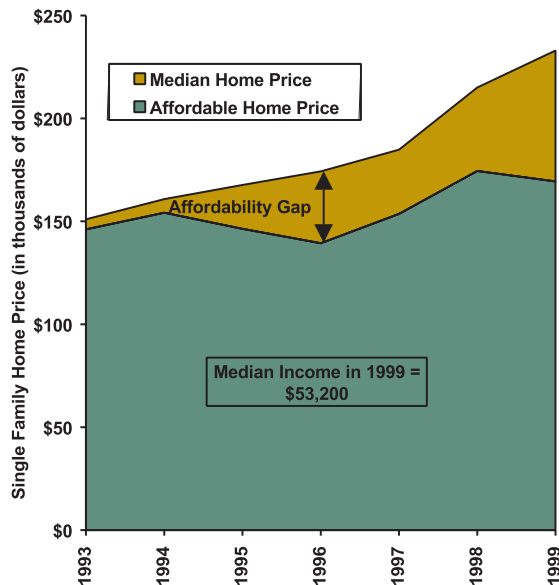
Hate crime data has been collected by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs for the Washington State Uniform Crime Reports since 1995. The Washington Hate Crime Malicious Harassment Act defines hate crimes as criminal offenses that are motivated by the offender's bias against the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or gender. A crime is determined to be a hate crime if the law enforcement investigation reveals that the offender's actions were motivated, in whole or in part, by bias. There is one bias motivation per incident and one offense per victim.



## Affordable Housing

Lack of adequate and affordable housing is a significant problem, especially for low income families. Families that have to pay a high percentage of their income for shelter will have little left over for other basic necessities, such as clothing and utilities. The ability of low and moderate income families to find affordable housing can be measured by the housing affordability gap, existing affordable housing stock, and the percent of income spent on housing costs.

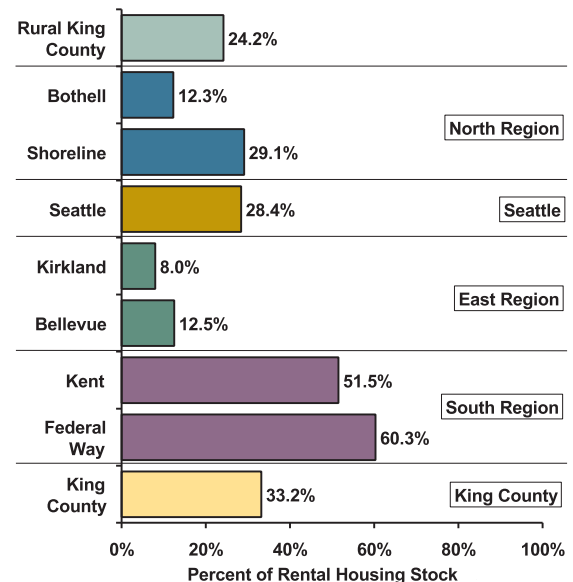
**Housing Affordability Gap  
For Median Income Home Buyers  
King County, 1993-1999**



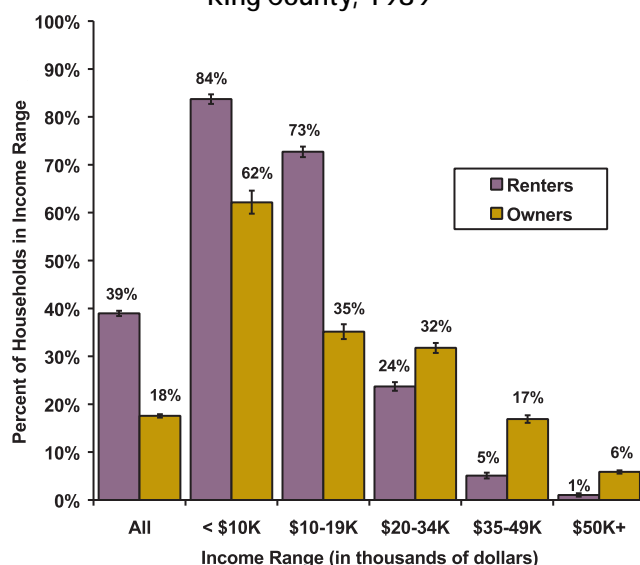
- The housing affordability gap is the difference between actual home sale prices and rents, and the price that families can reasonably afford.
- Purchasing a home in King County is difficult even for median income families. The gap between what these families can afford and the median market home price increased from 1995 through 1999. The median price for a single family home in 1999 was \$234,000, but a family in the middle income range could only afford to pay \$169,400.

**Percent of Rental Housing Stock That  
is Affordable to Low-Income Households  
Major King County Cities, 1998-1999**

- For low income families (earning 50% of median income or less), many apartment rentals may be beyond their reach. In 1999, the average monthly rent on a 2 bedroom/1 bath apartment in King County exceeded the affordable payment of a low-income family by about \$67. In recent years, this value has ranged from \$43 in 1985 to \$141 in 1992 (data not shown).
- The availability of low-cost rental housing varies among cities and regions in King County. Cities in South Region have a greater proportion of affordable housing for low income renters than the other regions. East Region has the lowest proportion of affordable housing (data shown only for the two largest cities in each region).



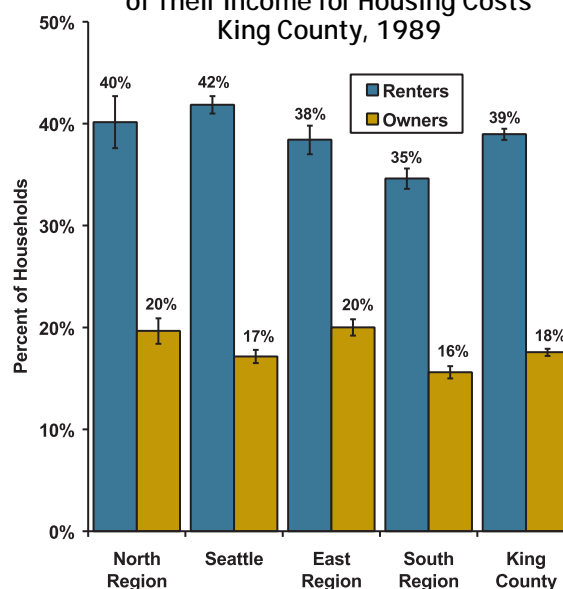
**Percent of Households By Income Range That Paid 30% or More of Their Income for Housing Costs  
King County, 1989**



- Fewer renters and owners pay a high percentage of their income on housing in South Region than in any other region.
- Seattle has the greatest percentage of households paying 30% or more of their income on rent.
- North and East Regions have the greatest percentage of households paying 30% or more of their income on owner housing costs.

- The Housing Affordability gap assumes that renters are paying 30% or less of their income on rent, and the average home buyer will pay 25% or less of their income on mortgage. (These are considered the standards for “affordable”). However, competition for affordable housing may force families to pay an even greater percentage of their income on housing.
- In general, the lower a household's income is, the more likely they are to pay 30% or more of their income on housing costs. This is true for renters as well as homeowners. Low income households that pay a high percentage of their income on housing are at greater risk for becoming homeless.

**Percent of Households That Paid 30% or More of Their Income for Housing Costs  
King County, 1989**



### Data Source, Definition, and Limitations

Data on the housing affordability gap and affordable housing stock are from the King County Office of Regional Policy & Planning report, “An Annual Bulletin Tracking Housing Costs in King County, October 1999”. For the calculation of the affordability gap, it is assumed that a “reasonable” monthly payment is no more than 25% of income for home buyers and 30% of income for renters. The affordable home price is based on conventional lending assumptions: 10% down payment and 30-year term at prevailing market interest rates. Family size is assumed to be 2.5 persons. Income estimates by family size were provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and are for the Seattle-Bellevue-Everett Metropolitan Statistical Area (King, Snohomish, and Island counties). Median income is the income earned by the middle household if all households are arranged in order according to income. Low income is defined as one half of median income.

1989 income range and housing cost data are from 1990 U.S. Census. For renters, housing costs include monthly rent, utilities and fuels. For owners, housing costs include mortgage payments, real estate taxes, insurance, utilities, and fuels. They also include monthly condominium and mobile home costs. The geographic boundaries of King County and the four sub-county regions are defined by aggregating census tracts.